COMPLETE LISTING OF CLAIMS IN APPLICATION

1. (Previously presented) A method of processing bid information for an electronic auction comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a database of items available for auction;

(b) receiving a set of bids from one or more bidders for a corresponding set of items selected from said database, each bid in said set of bids including at least a bid price and a bid ranking specified by a bidder for an item;

wherein said bid ranking from said bidder for an item represents a desired order in which a bid is to be resolved in the electronic auction compared to any other bids made by such bidder for other items in said database of items;

further wherein said bidder can specify that a set of ranked bids submitted by such bidder for a set of items should be treated as mutually exclusive, such that the electronic auction determines at most a single item to be awarded to said bidder from said set of ranked bids by correlating a ranking relationship between separate items bid on by said bidder.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a set of bids from any particular bidder each include a unique bid ranking for each of said corresponding set of items.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further including a step (c): providing a maximum bid price for each bid, and an auto-bid indicator for raising said bid price as needed until said maximum bid price is reached.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further including a step (c): monitoring a status of the electronic auction, including a high bid for an item, and information relating to other conditional bids for said item.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further including a step (c): selecting a guaranteed purchase option for an item so that said item is purchased without undergoing further processing in the electronic auction.

6. (Previously presented) A method of monitoring bid information for an electronic auction comprising the steps of:

(a) retrieving a set of items from an auction database in accordance with a specified search criteria;

(b) displaying said set of items;

(c) for each item in said set of items, displaying a current highest unconditional bid price specified by a bidder and information relating to any conditional bids specified by other bidders for said item;

    wherein said conditional bids are not considered by an auction processing engine until and unless they become unconditional bids during an auction period associated with said item.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein said set of items correspond to inventory to be auctioned during a common auction period.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein said information relating to said conditional bids includes a numerical value indicating a number of said conditional bids having a bid price equal to or exceeding said highest unconditional bid price and/or a minimum bid price for said item.

9. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein said items correspond to access rights to an entertainment facility.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein said entertainment facility is a golf course, and said items are golf tee times at said golf course.

11 - 36 (Canceled)

37.   (Previously presented) A method of conducting an electronic auction comprising the steps of:

    (a) compiling a database of items available for auction;

    (b) grouping said items based on a common auction period to create a set of common items available to a plurality of purchasers for bidding;

    (c) receiving bids for said set of common items from said plurality of purchasers, said bids including at least a bid price and a bid ranking specified by a purchaser for an item, said bids being comprised of separate sets of mutually exclusive bids from each of said plurality of purchasers for separate and mutually exclusive items;

    (d) processing said separate sets of mutually exclusive bids based on both said bid price and said bid ranking specified by said purchaser for said set of common items to determine winning bids for each item in said set of common items by correlating a ranking relationship between bids for separate items made by such purchasers.

38.   (Original) The method of claim 37, wherein each of said plurality of users receives at most one winning bid for said set of common items.

39.   (Original) The method of claim 37, wherein a winning bid for an item in said set of common items is determined by comparing bids submitted by purchasers in an order determined by said bid ranking submitted by said purchasers for said item.

40.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein said electronic auction for an item proceeds in a sequence determined by examining highest ranked bids in said separate sets of bids submitted for said item by purchasers, and not by reference to a highest bid price offered for said item.

41.   (Original) The method of claim 37, further including the following steps: (e): notifying a first purchaser when a highest ranked bid from said first purchaser is determined to be not a winning bid for an item; (f) permitting said first purchaser to increase an amount of said bid price for said item within a predetermined time period; (g) notifying a second purchaser that their highest ranked bid is a winning bid when said first purchaser does not increase their bid price within said predetermined price period.

42.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein said winning bids can be determined even before an end of said common auction period by giving purchasers an immediate purchase option.

43.   (Previously Amended) The method of claim 37, wherein said bid prices for said separate sets of mutually exclusive bids for said set of common items, but not said bid rankings, are visible to said plurality of purchasers during said common auction period.

44. (Previously presented) A method of conducting an electronic auction of a group of items within a predetermined auction time period, comprising the steps of:

    a) receiving a plurality of bids from a plurality of potential purchasers, said plurality of bids each including a bid price for an item in the group and a bid ranking specified by a purchaser for said item;

    b) examining said bids to create a set of active bids for said item, said set of active bids being comprised only of bids having a highest bid ranking specified by a purchaser for said item and corresponding to a subset of said plurality of bids from a subset of said plurality of potential purchasers;

    c) creating an ordered set of active bids for said item based on a bid price provided for said bid;

    d) determining a minimum winning bid for said item by examining said ordered set of active bids;

    e) notifying a corresponding one potential purchaser from said subset of potential purchasers when an associated active bid for said item from said potential purchaser has an associated active bid price below said minimum winning bid;

    f) setting a selected active bid in said ordered set of active bids as a winning bid for said item when said selected active bid exceeds said minimum winning bid;

wherein a potential purchaser can specify that any bids be treated as mutually exclusive so that only one of said bids is satisfied for said potential purchaser by correlating a ranking relationship between separate items bid on by such potential purchaser.

45. (Original) The method of claim 44, further including a step: (e)': dropping said associated active bid from consideration when said one potential purchaser does not increase said associated active bid price within a predetermined time period.

46. (Previously amended) The method of claim 44, further including a step (g): selecting a next highest ranking bid specified by a potential purchaser as an active bid for a different item in the group for those potential purchasers not obtaining said winning bid for said item.

47. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein during step (d), a minimum price set by a seller of said item is considered to determine whether a minimum winning bid exists.

48. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein during step (f), a potential purchaser is notified of said winning bid prior to an expiration of the predetermined auction period if no other active bids exist for said item.

49. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein during step (b), a set of active bids is created for each of the items in the group, so that all of the items in the group are auctioned substantially simultaneously.

50. (Previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein the electronic auction is conducted such that a potential purchaser can provide a bid for more than one item, and for items having different auction expiration periods, but only receives a single winning bid at most for items having different auction expiration periods.

51.   (Previously presented) A method of conducting an electronic auction for an item comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving a plurality of bids from a plurality of potential purchasers for the item, said plurality of bids each including a bid price and a bid ranking specified by the purchasers for the item;

(b) sorting said plurality of bids to form a set of active bids for the item, said set of active bids for the item including only those bids in which a potential purchaser designated said bid for said item with a highest bid ranking among all bids submitted by said potential purchaser;

(c) determining a winning bid for said item by referring only to said set of active bids associated with said item.

52. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein during step (c), the winning bid is not necessarily determined by reference to which of said plurality of bids has a highest bid price for a respective one of the group of items.

53. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein any bids from a potential purchaser include at least one unconditional bid for at least one item, and any other bids from said potential purchasers for other items are conditional bids.

54. (Previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein each potential purchaser must provide a bid and bid ranking for each item in the group of items.

55. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein at most only one bid from said potential purchaser is matched with an item, regardless of a number of bids provided by said potential purchaser for items in the group.

56. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein each of said plurality of potential purchasers can submit more than one bid, but can receive at most only one winning bid for a single item from the group of items.

57. (Previously presented) A method of conducting an electronic auction for an item comprising the steps of:

    (a)   identifying a set of highest ranked bids from bids made by bidders for the item;

            wherein a highest ranked bid corresponds to a bid specified by a bidder as a highest ranked bid compared to bid rankings specified by a bidder for other bids made by said bidder;

    (b)   designating said set of highest ranked bids as active bids for said bidders;

    (c)   determining whether any of said active bids are a potential winning bid for the item by comparing said active bids against each other and any previously determined winning bid;

    (d)   designating any active bid that is a potential winning bid as a winning bid;

    (e)   deleting any active bids that are not designated as a winning bid;

    (f)   repeating steps (c) to (e) during an auction period until no active bids remaining that are higher than said winning bid.

58. (Original) The method of claim 57, further including a step (d)': notifying a bidder if an active bid for said bidder is not a preliminary winning bid, and specifying a re-bid period for said bidder to increase said active bid.

59. (Original) The method of claim 58, further including a step (e)': receiving a new active bid from a bidder during said re-bid period, which new active bid has a higher bid price than an earlier active bid from said bidder.

60. (Original) The method of claim 58, further including a step (g): designating a next highest ranked bid from said bidder as an active bid for another item when said bidder does not increase said active bid during said re-bid period.

61. (Original) The method of claim 57, wherein during step (b), any active bids for an item are designated without regard to a bid price of said bids.

62. (Original) The method of claim 57, wherein a plurality of items, each with a set of corresponding active bids, is processed at the same time to determine a plurality of winning bids.

63. (Original) The method of claim 57, wherein said winning bid is a highest bid price taken from said active bids, not a highest bid price taken from all bids on said item.

64. (Previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein each bidder can submit a plurality of bids and associated bid rankings for a plurality of items, but at most only one of said bids is declared a winning bid.

65. (Previously presented) A method of conducting an auction comprising the steps of:

    a. receiving a listing of a plurality of mutually exclusive items from a plurality of sellers;

    b. receiving a plurality of ranked bids from a plurality of users on said plurality of mutually exclusive items;

        wherein each user submits a plurality of mutually exclusive bids so that such user is given an option of only securing one of such mutually exclusive items based on correlating a ranking relationship between said plurality of ranked bids made on separate items bid on by such user;

    c. identifying a plurality of highest ranked bids, said highest ranked bids being specified by each of said plurality of users for one of their bids in their plurality of mutually exclusive bids;

    d. tagging said plurality of highest ranked bids as active bids;

    e. using only said active bids to determine a plurality of preliminary winning bids for said plurality of mutually exclusive items;

    f. tagging said plurality of preliminary winning bids;

    g. eliminating all non-winning bids;

    h. identifying a plurality of next highest ranked bids as specified by said plurality of users for each of said plurality of users not obtaining a winning bid;

    i. designating said plurality of next highest ranked bids as active bids;

    j. comparing only said active bids and said winning bids;

    k. identifying a new preliminary winning bid for each of the plurality of mutually exclusive items and tagging said new preliminary winning bid;

    l. processing said plurality of ranked bids during a bidding period until all of said plurality of users have either a winning bid or no remaining active bids;

    m. transmitting the results of the auction to said plurality of users.

66. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein said ranked bid is made to purchase a mutually exclusive item usable by a group of two or more individuals.

67. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein said plurality of ranked bids are unconditional bids.

68. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein new ranked bids may be submitted any time before an end of said bidding period.

69. (Original) The method of claim 65, wherein a notice is conveyed to a user if an associated user current active bid is designated a non-winning bid, said notice giving a prescribed time frame to increase said non-winning bid.

70. (Original) The method of claim 69, wherein said non-winning bid is declared a non-active bid if said user does not increase said bid during the prescribed time frame.

71 – 75 (Canceled)

76.　(Previously presented) A system for conducting an electronic auction of items comprising:

(a)　an auction controller accessible by a number of bidding computing systems;

(b)　an auction inventory database accessible by said auction controller, and being adapted to store identifying information for the items; and

(c)　an auction bid database accessible by said auction controller, and being adapted to store information for bids on the items, each of said bids including both a bid price and a bid ranking specified by a bidder for an item, said bid ranking corresponding to a desired order in which a bid is to be resolved compared to any other bids made by such bidder for other items in said database of items;

said auction controller being configured such that it processes said bids for said items in accordance with both said bid price and said bid ranking specified by a bidder for said items and such that said bidder's ranked bids for any of the items can be treated as mutually exclusive by correlating a ranking relationship between ranked bids made on separate items bid on by such bidder.

77. (Original) The system of claim 76, further including an e-mail processor for notifying bidders of results of the electronic auction.

78. (Original) The system of claim 76, further including an administrative computing device for performing administrative tasks for said auction controller.

79. (Original) The system of claim 76, wherein said bidding computing systems are connected through a network to said auction controller.

80. (Original) The system of claim 76, wherein all of the items are auctioned at the same time.

81. (Previously presented) A system for conducting an electronic auction of items comprising:

(a) an electronic auction file for storing information concerning auction items;

(b) an electronic bid file for storing a set of bids for a corresponding set of items selected from said auction file, each bid in said set of bids including at least a bid price and a bid ranking specified by a bidder for an item;

(c) an electronic auction processor for processing said set of bids based on both said bid price and said bid ranking specified by bidders for said corresponding set of items to determine if there is at least one winning bid for one of said corresponding set of items; and

wherein a single bidder can bid on more than one item in the electronic auction, but said electronic auction processor can be programmed to only generate at most a single winning bid for said single bidder by correlating a ranking relationship between bids made on separate items bid on by such single bidder.

82 – 84 (Canceled)

85. (Previously presented) An electronic auction program for processing auction bids for an item comprising:

(a) a first program portion for identifying a set of highest ranked bids from bids made by bidders for the item, and for designating said set of highest ranked bids as active bids for said bidders;

wherein a highest ranked bid from a bidder corresponds to a bid specified by the bidder as a highest ranked item compared to rankings for other items which bidder is bidding on;

(b) a second program portion for determining whether any of said active bids are a potential winning bid for the item by comparing said active bids against each other and any previously determined winning bid;

(c) a third program portion for designating any active bid that is a potential winning bid as a winning bid;

(d) a fourth program portion for deleting any active bids that are not designated as a winning bid;

(e) a fifth program portion for coordinating said first program portion, said second program portion, said third program portion and said fourth program portion during an auction period until no active bids remain that are higher than said winning bid;

wherein only bidders for which the item is a highest ranked bid are considered for potential winning bids on the item.

86. (Original) The electronic auction program of claim 85, wherein the electronic auction program executes from a computing system accessible by a plurality of user computing devices adapted to enter said bids.

87. (Original) The electronic auction program of claim 85, wherein the computing system is a server accessible on the internet, and said user computing devices include web browsers for interacting with web pages on said server for entering said bids.

88 – 93 (Canceled)

94. (Previously presented) An electronic auction system comprising:

    a. means for entering auction inventory items; and

    b. means for storing said auction inventory items; and

    c. means for reviewing said auction inventory items; and

    d. means for querying said auction inventory items to create selected auction inventory items satisfying selection criteria of a potential bidder;

    e. means for entering a bid amount and a bid ranking specified by a bidder for one or more of said selected auction inventory items to create one or more bid entries;

    f. means for storing said bid entries;

    g. means for processing said bid entries to determine winning bids for said auction inventory items, said winning bids being based on both said bid amount and said bid ranking;

    wherein a bidder can specify that a set of bids submitted by such bidder for a set of items in said auction inventory items should be processed as mutually exclusive by specifying that a ranking relationship should be correlated between separate bids made by such bidder on separate items;

    h. means for transmitting a notification associated with said winning bids to one or more bidders.

95. (Original) The system of claim 94, wherein bid entries for an auction item from any individual bidder consist of at least one unconditional bid.

96. (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising means for transmitting a notice to a bidder that their bid entries do not include a winning bid.

97. (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means for permitting a bidder who has been outbid for an auction item to increase a bid amount of a bid entry.

98. (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means for coordinating payment of any winning bids.

99. (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means for observing a status of any auctions.

100.   (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means to store user information.

101.   (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means to store vendor information.

102.   (Original) The system of claim 94, further comprising a means to store and retrieve historical auction results.